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FOREWORD

By LORD LUGARD

THIS exhaustive treatise on one of the most important communities in Nigeria owes its inception to the generosity of the Rockefeller Foundation of New York, which placed a large sum at the disposal of the International Institute for the Study of African Languages and Cultures. Fellowships were instituted to enable specially trained students to undertake scientific research into the social organization of a selected unit of African society, the factors of social cohesion which operate to prevent its disintegration by contact with European civilization, the openings for co-operation, and the tendencies towards new groupings. Others were specially concerned with linguistic studies.

Dr. Nadel, of the University of Vienna, was one of the original Fellows, and he selected the Nupe of the middle Niger for his field of research. He brought to his task not only a thorough mastery of the technique of scientific investigation, but an original mind, and a sympathy with and understanding of the African, which won the confidence and friendship without which scientific qualifications can effect little.

His exceptional talents as a linguist enabled him not only to converse, at first in the *lingua franca* (Hausa), but in less than six months to acquire, and speak with fluency the very difficult 'tone' language of the Nupe. Many an English reader of this book may even envy his command of idiomatic English. The Nupe seem to have regarded him as an unusual phenomenon and conferred upon him a high title of tribal rank.

As an 'Anthropologist' he is concerned at the outset to explain that the term—whether 'functional', 'practical', or 'applied'—is ill adapted to the research he had undertaken. But surely the study of 'a native society in all its complexity', and the factors which had affected its social evolution are better described as 'Sociology' than as 'Anthropology'—which is defined as 'the study of man as an animal'? A clear understanding on the other hand of the connotation of the term 'Culture' as used by a highly qualified sociologist is essential to the appreciation of his work.

> 'Culture (he says) varies with environment and . . . expresses the changing dominant interests involved in social, political, and economic conditions. . . . It is not a sum total of discrete traits (but) . . . a conscious unity created by and embodied in a common group life (by) . . . the people who form the group, . . . specific to it and only to it irrespective of variations within, or similarities with groups outside, the tribal boundaries.' (pp. 14–15.)

The distinctive individuality of the 'tribe' depends in turn on the presumption that it is a 'group possessing more or less the same culture' and language.

The 'social and economic complexity' of the Nupe State as it exists

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in the study of these historical cultures is equally barred. Very few historical records exist, and they are hardly informative from the sociological point of view. The people of Nupe have not yet risen to the stage of education producing written records and accounts of important events or institutions. With the exception of a few educated Mohammedan scholars whose co-operation I was able to enlist in the recording of folklore and historical traditions, I have been unable to use a single literate informant, for example, to keep diaries of important events, or to handle questionnaires. Lastly, the most essential evidence in the study of complex societies, namely statistics, scarcely exists. The statistics in this book were, with few exceptions, compiled single-handed and on a scale of the inadequacy of which no one can be more aware than the author.

I have described elsewhere the technique of inquiry which I applied, and need say nothing on that point here.[1] But it is necessary to describe the general plan of research I pursued, for it illustrates the methods by which I attempted to circumvent some of the difficulties just mentioned. I spent two years in the field, in the course of two expeditions in 1934 and 1935–6. From the outset I was confronted with the problem how to cover, in intensive study, the vast area inhabited by the Nupe people. The political configuration forbade the selection of one section to the disregard of others. The widespread political system had clearly to be studied at different points, in its centre as well as on its periphery. Moreover, a short preliminary survey already revealed the existence of considerable cultural differences within the tribe. The further my studies proceeded the more manifest became the significance of these differences as variations of a common pattern, the study of which was essential to the understanding of the forces that moulded the culture of the people. The investigation thus became perforce a comparative study within the framework of one tribe and one culture. At a certain stage of my investigation I even had to go outside this framework and devote some study to neighbouring groups—the Kakanda, Gbari, and Bassa—which, closely akin to the Nupe and partly their fellow citizens in the Nupe kingdom, might throw light on certain aspects of Nupe culture.

The main problem was to discover representative sections and centres for the study of this widely spread social system and its varying culture. I will not speak of the difficulties which I encountered in this task, helped as I was only by records and information which soon proved superficial and inexact. In the first six or seven months I was reduced almost to the method of trial and error: a very short stay in a new place would have been useless even merely to discover whether or not this place might prove a useful centre; and once I decided on a long stay the time was gone and could not be recovered even if the place turned out to be less profitable than I had expected. Let me admit that this did indeed happen in two villages (Mokwa and Sakpe) which I had made my centres upon the advice of various informants and which, as I discovered later, were not as significant or essential as certain other places would have been. However, certain general facts about the culture and the

[1] See 'The Interview Technique in Social Anthropology', in *The Study of Society*, chapter xiii, 1939.

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people could be obtained there as well as anywhere, and on my second expedition I could to some extent correct the mistakes of the first. On the other hand, I was unable to study one or two villages (e.g. Yeti, in the oil-palm area, and Kutiwengi, where an interesting variety of a certain religious cult is reported to exist), partly because I had discovered their significance too late, and partly because my time did not allow the inclusion of further centres and communities.

The main centres on which I based my investigation were: Bida town, with its surrounding belt of hamlets and small villages; the large villages of Kutigi, in the centre of Nupe country, and Mokwa, in the west; and finally Jebba Island on the Niger, which commands an important stretch of the river area. Each of these centres I visited several times. The repeated periods of study enabled me to check my material and to remedy oversights; often they led to the discovery of new points of view which only emerged from the comparison of the cultural variations typical of different areas and local communities. In addition I stayed for shorter periods in certain other communities in order to study a specific question or to collect certain comparative evidence. Thus, for example, I paid several short visits to the village Lemu, twenty miles north of Bida, because a new commercial crop had been adopted that year by the people of Lemu; and once I spent two weeks in Patigi (a quite uninteresting visit, by the way), because there the last descendants of the old dynasty of Nupe kings hold court.

Bida, the large capital of the country, required the longest time. Here also I began my studies of the Nupe language with the help of the English- and Hausa-speaking teachers of Bida Middle School. During these first months I carried out my anthropological work through the medium of Hausa, which I had studied before going to the field, and which is widely understood among the people of Bida, but from the fifth or sixth month of my stay I used Nupe exclusively. During the first expedition I spent altogether six months in Bida and the Bida area, in the course of three visits; three months in Kutigi, in the course of two visits; and one month each in Mokwa, Agaie, and Jebba Island. During the second expedition I spent five months in Bida, in the course of two visits, two months in Kutigi, in the course of two visits, three months, in one visit, in Jebba and on the river, and two months on travels to the neighbouring area of Gbari country and to Ilorin, Ibadan, and Lokoja, where I made a special study of the large Nupe colonies in these towns.

The difficulty of discovering in this large and complex culture representative areas and group sections, and of distinguishing them from others whose cultural life must be regarded as a variation of the main pattern, arises in a different form with regard to documentation. The problem here is how to prove with scientific exactitude the typical or non-typical nature of cultural facts and events, and how to present them convincingly as representative or as in some degree deviating from the norm. The distinction between typical and non-typical facts is primarily a question of frequency, and the ideal method of documentation would be one in which all descriptions and analyses were backed by statistical evidence. For obvious reasons such a method of documentation is rarely

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other societies, differently organized, different factors might prove relevant (for example, among the Navaho, the smallness of the group, envy of wealth, and irregular, autocratic leadership).[1] But might it not be that the whole belief in witchcraft (of any kind) is similarly a variant, one of several possibilities of canalizing anxieties and tensions, which would once more depend upon something in the make-up of cultures? It must be so, since there exist societies (if few in number) which are without this kind of belief even though they are not without conflicts or tensions. And it must be so also for another reason.

Granted that suppressed hatreds, unresolved conflicts, and the like occur in most (or all) societies, they could surely be offered adequate relief by means other than beliefs in witchcraft. The hatreds and the persecution of aliens; licensed occasional outbursts of hectic excitement; or the licensed aggression of war or of sectional combats, are familiar instances; all three also occur in Nupe. It may of course be that they offer insufficient relief, or themselves add further anxieties or tensions. But there is no way of measuring the potential of these different chances of relief; we cannot compare them and say 'each can only do so much', as we might say of the lack of vitamins in one kind of food that it must be made good by their presence in another. If the incidence of neuroses and other psychopathological derangements is an index of unrelieved mental tensions, then the reliefs just mentioned are indeed 'not enough' in Nupe; but they are not enough even combined with witchcraft beliefs. However this may be, witchcraft beliefs exist *although* there are these other possibilities of relieving tensions; which is true not only of Nupe but of most societies in the world. We must conclude that they have a *raison d'être* of their own, apart from that implied in the psychological mechanism of projection, displacement, and the rest: which *raison d'être*, as I have suggested, must lie in 'something in the make-up of cultures' (of most cultures).

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In a paper written many years ago I attempted to formulate that reason. As I now know, I was wrong; my attempt was vitiated, above all, by the fact that I had considered Nupe witchcraft in isolation from the rest of the religious system. But since my error too is instructive I may be allowed to repeat here the main argument.[2] I argued that religious faith, if it clings naïvely to the promises of religion—of guidance as to how to act; of supernatural or divine protection if that guidance is followed; and of some ultimately just and benevolent order of things—must on occasion face failure. For only too often are these promises belied, by

[1] Op. cit., pp. 174, 177, 178–9.
[2] See *Africa*, vol. VIII, pp. 444–5.

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disease, sudden death, misfortune, injustice, that is, by the evil things in the world. Thus in all religions there are attempts to justify or resolve, or to dismiss as merely apparent, this contradiction of promise and fulfilment. The attempts vary in philosophical refinement. The religious doctrine may, in the vein of stoic philosophy, explain the presence of evil as a foil for the visibility of the good; or it can make the evil things, like the sufferings of Job, a touchstone of faith; or it may lay their cause into the imperfection of man, so that his sins (willed or not, actual or intended) are behind the apparent failures of divine providence. Or finally, and more crudely, the religion may contain a loophole within itself, admitting a province where evil is simply allowed to reign. The devil of naïve belief is one embodiment of this loophole-idea; the witch another.

It is true that the belief in the evil actions of witches bears only upon a narrow variety of that abstract 'evil in the world' meant by philosophers or theologians. Even so, the 'loophole' remains. Let us remember also that the belief in witches safeguards itself from being 'found out' and proved or refuted by empirical means; in embracing this incontrovertible belief, then, religious faith itself is safeguarded from being found illusory and refuted by reality. Speaking practically, the acceptance of witchcraft (or of the devil) saves the believer from false hopes or disillusion; speaking philosophically, the acceptance of an ultimate X within the divinely ordered universe saves that order. Admitting that there is a province where the believed-in guidance and protection do not fully reach, we save the belief in laws to guide us and in that promise of protection. Witchcraft, in brief, is a chapter in apologetics, albeit crudely written.

So far my original conclusions (somewhat paraphrased). Now though they are, I believe, correct for other systems of religious belief, they do not seem to apply to Nupe religion. Granting that beliefs in witchcraft can save faith in a divine order of the universe, in Nupe religion, there is nothing of the kind to save; if in other societies or cultures there must be the admission of that ultimate X to account for, or explain away, the failure of religious guidance and promise of protection, in Nupe, this guidance and promise have never been offered. Nupe religion, as we know, admits accidents at every step; it promises only fallible guidance and protection; the observances or ethical rules it upholds are not meant to be counted upon against the many evils which are also in the world—malevolent spirits, diseases, uncontrollable misfortune. Indeed, the deity himself has put them in the world and suffers them to exist, being unconcerned with the fate of his creation. Why, then, should there be this further, special

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assumption of the evil of witchcraft? The problem which it might serve to solve simply does not exist.

Yet there remains another problem, requiring a kindred solution. With the admission of accident, with the conception of an unpredictable and amoral universe, the problem of the presence of evil is solved intellectually or, at least, argued away on the intellectual plane. But this solution leaves an emotional gap. For I hold that there is a deeply seated desire for certainty, which demands satisfaction of an essentially emotional kind, that is, the awareness that the world is not only certain, but concerned with *you*—your fate, your happiness. And where this demand is refused (as in Nupe) anxieties and frustrations must again arise and press for some ab-reaction and solution. But now those other outlets which might relieve the pent-up tension, through random acts of aggression or some explosive catharsis, would prove inadequate; they would take care of the symptoms but not of the conflicts from which these spring. Nor can the disturbance of the longed-for certainty be overcome save by discovering the disturber; the vague dissatisfaction with an abstract state of affairs must be capable of crystallizing into the accusations of concrete agents. Above all, there must be the chance of practical action, so that the people aware of the threat also have the satisfaction of dealing with it. In other words, precisely because you know that the world around you holds out no promise of certainty nor any supreme design, you conjure up an arch-enemy with whom at least you can reckon, on whom you can vent fears and hatreds, and over whom you may hope to triumph, be it Satan or the witch.

The witch is, perhaps, less of an arch-enemy, since only some of the evils of the world can be laid at her doorstep. Yet the conjured-up picture of human beings who are unaccountably evil and unaccountably cause death and disease does take care of a portion of the uncertainty in the world. Now, we previously said that the admission of a province of life where the benevolent design of the universe does not reach saves the faith in that universe: this clearly does not apply. We must now say—the admission of a province of life where malevolent forces can be defined (and attacked), makes it possible to bear a universe devoid of such design. To be sure, this is no longer our 'loophole' theory; but it is as it were its photographic negative, or the same mathematical formula with all pluses changed into minus signs. Crudely speaking, you may have a God of Justice and Mercy, naïvely conceived, and devils or witches in the background; or you may have an Idle God, remotely in the background, but at least devils or witches to grapple with.

That the notion of witchcraft may arise from such opposed con-

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on the right bank of the Niger, where Lokoja now stands, but at its founding moved over to the left bank where they are to-day, in the Basa-Nge District of Igala Division, Kabba Province. The District contains 12 riverain and nine inland units, which are mostly Basa-Nge, except for five Igala and two Igbira-Panda-Kakanda. The largest is Gbonoko, the District headquarters. The Basa-Nge are subject to the *Ata* Gala.[16]

Other groups, originally alien, but now Nupeized

Konú (Eyagi-Nupe): of Yoruba (Yagba) origin, brought to Nupe country as slaves to introduce the Yoruba arts of weaving and indigo-dyeing. They are to be found in Kutigi and the neighbouring villages.[17]

Gbari Bautá ("Gbari slaves"): in the north of Nupe territory near the Gbari border.[18]

Kakanda (Hyaba, Akanda):[19] on both banks of the Niger, north of its confluence with the Gurara River. They are of non-Nupe stock, though, according to Temple,[20] they have always lived among the Nupe. Clifford, however, says that they were formerly (? *c.* 1750) subject to Igala.[21] They have certainly undergone cultural assimilation to the Nupe and have adopted the language of the Nupe "proper." According to Westermann and Bryan, they speak either a dialect of Nupe or a closely related language.[22]

Ibanji: a sub-tribe mentioned in the 1931 Census, which has not been identified.

In addition to the groups mentioned above, Temple gives several names which are villages or settlements and not sub-tribes.[23] Her *Bata* (misprinted *Bafa* in the 1931 Census) and described as an agricultural people living in Lapai Emirate are not Nupe but probably Gbari. Her *Bororóshi* (nomadic cattle Fulani) only come to Nupe on seasonal migration and are not Nupeized; her *Góishi* (settled Fulani) are the Fulani ruling class of Nupe Emirate and not a group in a tribal sense.[24]

Demographic Data

Population Estimates

1952 Census: 348,979 (Northern Region)
10,198 (Eastern and Western Regions)
1931 Census: 326,017 (Northern Provinces)
1921 Census: 349,008 (Northern Provinces)

Sub-tribes[25]

1931 Census:[26]

Beni	48,595	Ebe	9,100	Dibo	18,220
Bataci	4,627	Kupa	15,470	Kakanda ..	4,518
Kyedye	2,493	Benu	7,457	Basa-Nge ..	19,163

The figures of the 1931 Census show a decrease of 23,000 or 7% on the figures for 1921. Fluctuations in the earlier numbers given for the populations have resulted

[16] Nadel, 1942, p. 12; Hopkins, 1934; Westermann and Bryan, 1952, p. 86.
[17] Nadel, op cit., p. 20.
[18] Ibid., p. 21.
[19] They should not be confused with the Akanda of Kabba and Koton Karifi Divisions of Kabba Province who are Yoruba. The Kakanda are said by Meek (1917) to call themselves Ashe. They are known to the Hausa as Bunu (the name of a Yoruba section) and to the Igbira as Ehabe (MacBride, 1935).
[20] Temple, 1919, p. 167.
[21] Miles Clifford, "A Nigerian chiefdom," *J. roy. anthrop. inst.*, LXVI, 1936, pp. 392–436.
[22] Westermann and Bryan, loc. cit.; Nadel, op. cit., p. 13.
[23] e.g. Baedegi, Sakpe, Etsu, Pateji, Kutegi, Enagi, Gbachi, Duchu, Zumbufu.
[24] See Nadel, 1942, p. 71.
[25] Figures for all the sub-tribes listed above are not available, but the Census gives 11,944 for "Ibanji," which has not been identified.
[26] Later figures are not available.

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universal scale of mental characteristics or abilities. The present investigation is in no way concerned with measuring or rating psychological reactions and characteristics. It is devoted to a qualitative analysis, more precisely: a qualitative comparative analysis, of the higher mental processes—perception, memory and thinking processes—of two primitive peoples. Its primary aim is to discover 'typical' psychological traits among groups of different culture, in other words, to study by means of a psychological experiment what Professor Bartlett calls the "preferred, persistent tendencies of groups" (3), p. 255).

During two anthropological expeditions to West Africa (Northern Nigeria) I had made some effort to combine anthropological work with experimental psychological studies. I had been working for some time among two neighbouring tribes, the Yoruba and the Nupe. These, living side by side, in the same material environment, under the same general conditions and at the same stage of civilization, yet present a picture of two entirely different, almost antagonistic cultures. This seemed an ideal situation for an investigation on the lines of such 'racial' or culture-psychology. Thus I carried out the same series of experiments among both groups, and I shall describe in the following pages some of the results of this comparative study.

II. The experiments

I propose to describe two sets of experiments which correspond very closely to the type of experiment used by Bartlett, namely experiments on *Description* and *Repeated Reproduction* of pictures and stories (3), p. 45 *et seq.*). The pictures were photographs of objects or scenes with which the experimental subjects were all familiar. Some of them were enlargements of my own photographs taken in the country, and some were taken from the *Illustrated London News* and other illustrated papers. The story which was used I composed myself. It was modelled on a native folk-tale of a type fairly common both among Nupe and Yoruba, but with a view to bringing out certain psychological test facts. The experiments were, for practical reasons, carried out in schools, namely in the Government Middle Schools in which teaching is done by native teachers and to a large extent in the vernacular. The two series which I am describing here were done with 20 students from each community, of the age of 15–18. All experiments were done in the vernacular; among the Nupe I myself carried out the experiments, as I was speaking the language fluently; among the other group, the Yoruba, I trained two teachers to carry out the experiments for me.